The Clock Tower

The Newsletter of the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre

Issue Number 12: November 2008
£2.00; free to members

Christmas Number
and
Special issue to mark the 90th Anniversary of the World War One Armistice

In memory of Frederick Charles Wellard, grandfather of the new FOMA Membership Secretary, Betty Cole. The wooden cross, pictured, is a rare image of how the war graves appeared before their replacement by the now familiar rows of white stone. Frederick was killed at Arras, France, in August 1917. The front line diary records, '16/8/17 Normal trench routine. Trenches deepened where necessary. Enemy active with pineapples. S. Major Wellard killed. C.Q.M.S. Blackstock wounded (afterwards died).' Three days later the battalion was relieved. Fred left a widow and five young children, three of whom, including Betty's mother, Ivy, were sent to orphanages. More of Frederick's story can be read inside.

The Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre wish you a very happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year

News and Events

Odette Buchanan, Friends' Secretary

At the 2008 FOMA AGM, it was decided that members should take on all the clerical responsibilities of the organisation, especially as we are all over the age of consent (some more so than others). In a moment of mental aberration I agreed to take on the role of Secretary. Aeons ago I had been paid to be the secretary to the Overseas Sales Director of a multi-national company and had had recent voluntary secretarial experience with another Friends group which I helped found. As I got to know the rest of the FOMA Committee, I realised we were all in the same boat and my confidence grew. Whilst I cannot say I didn't struggle every now and then up the learning curve, I thankfully now seem to have reached the summit and am sliding down the other side. The e-mails which I didn't understand have abated somewhat, and I am now well aware that I do the minutes and agendas of meetings. I organize the AGM, do correspondence and field queries from members. I was also assigned circulation of information and reminders to all members, but that was a learning curve too steep: my computer refused to let me enter members' e-mail addresses en bloc, but John Witheridge came to my rescue and for this I am truly thankful! I can now enjoy being FOMA Secretary and I just hope my minute-taking skills and memory don't give out on me, to this end, the old adage, 'keep on taking the tablets' stands me in good stead. My contact details are as follows – and please do contact me, as I now know what to do with queries!

Odette Buchanan, FOMA Secretary, 72 Jersey Road, Rochester, ME2 3PE; telephone 01634 718231; email odette_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk

Shorts Brothers Commemorative Plaque

April Lambourne

At a ceremony at Shorts Reach Esplanade, Rochester, on Friday 26th September Local Studies Librarian, Norma Crowe, in her capacity as Chairman of the Shorts Brothers Commemoration Society, welcomed Rt. Hon Lord Brabazon of Tara who unveiled the plaque. Over 100 people attended the event including the Mayor and Mayoress of Medway, Cllr and Mrs David Carr and the High Sheriff of Kent, Richard Oldfield. The ceremony was followed by a fly-past by historic aircraft and outdoor refreshments for guests were served in Bridge House garden. Norma was subsequently invited to visit the Shorts factory in Belfast. She was made very welcome by them and attended their gala dinner and centenary exhibition and had a thoroughly enjoyable time.

The Shorts Brothers Commemorative Society was formed in 1997 by a small group of former employees and aviation history enthusiasts. One of the Society's main objectives was to raise a permanent memorial to the three Short brothers and their thousands of employees who produced aircraft at Sheppey and Rochester from 1908 to 1948 until the final move of Shorts to Belfast. To this end the Society commissioned ceramicist Frank Ashworth and his wife Sue, a calligrapher, to design and make a plaque.

FOMA member and roving reporter, Peter Burstow, comments on the Shorts Brothers Commemorative Society ceremony in 'FOMA Members'.

The plaque
Picture by Tony Clarke

Calendar of Forthcoming Events and Exhibitions

28th October to 31st December 2008
Who? What? Where? When? Unidentified Photographs in the Archives. A look at some unidentified photographs held at MALSC. Come along and see if you can solve some of our puzzles. No prizes though!
An exhibition by Tessa Towner.
Exhibitions are free to view.

21st November 7.00 pm for 7.30 pm
Rochester Baptist Church, Crow Lane, Rochester (please note this event is not taking place at MALSC)
Wine & Wisdom Nite
Our annual quiz
Tickets, including refreshments (bring your own drinks), are £4 for members £5 non-members.

9th December to 3rd February 2009
People's Palaces, Prefabs in Medway.
An Exhibition by April Lambourne and Jean Lear.
Exhibitions are free to view.

Wednesday 10th December 10.00 am to 12.00 noon
Mince Pie Day
Come along and meet the staff, enjoy seasonal refreshments, view the exhibitions and book sale!
at 2.30pm a talk by Michael Gandy:
Seeing it through their Songs.
A chance to see this popular speaker in action.
Talks are £3 for members £4 non-members. **BOOKING ESSENTIAL**.
Tickets for this event are available from malsc@medway.gov.uk or on +44 (0)1634 332714;
Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4AU.

6th February to 31st March 2009
Life in the Workhouse.
An exhibition by the Medway Branch of the Kent Family History Society (KFHS)
Exhibitions are free to view.

Unless otherwise indicated, all the above are held at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4AU. Further information is available from Odette Buchanan, FOMA Secretary, 72 Jersey Road, Rochester, ME2 3PE; telephone 01634 718231; email odette_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk

Please note: You may be aware that Medway Council is being relocated to Gun Wharf. This move does not include the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre and until further notice, we are still to be found in the Clock Tower building.

From the Chairman

Tessa Towner, Chairman.

With the 90th anniversary of the end of World War One, our thoughts turn to all those young men who sacrificed their lives in both world wars.

Over the last two years I have been researching the men whose names appear on the War Memorial in All Saints Church Frindsbury. My research was brought sharply into focus when the *Medway News* published the following article about the 94th anniversary of the death of Colin Knox Anderson on 23rd August 1914.

Memorial to Towns' dead hero

AS SUCH a celebrated military and naval base, Medway has thousands of brave predecessors that have fought for their country.

Many of their names grace memorials across the Towns and one such name is that of Lieutenant Colin Knox Anderson, one of the first British Army officers to be killed in action during the First World War.

Tomorrow (Saturday) marks the 94th anniversary of his death.

Lieut Anderson was brought up in Frindsbury but spent his teenage years as a boarder at Malvern College, Worcestershire.

He was well known for his passion for sport and was a keen footballer and the opening bowler for the Band of Brothers cricket club.

He left the family home and moved to Star Hill, Rochester, where he became a civil engineer.

At the outbreak of the First World War, Lieut. Anderson

Remembered: Lieutenant Colin Anderson

joined the 1st Battalion of the Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment.

He had been a special reserve officer with the 3rd Battalion of that regiment since 1908.

The 1st Battalion Royal West Kent were one of the first units to face the Germans.

This took place when A Company was detailed to cross the canal bridge at Tertre, France, to provide a defensive cover for a reconnaissance party of cyclists and hussars.

But the German advance was much quicker than had be expected and about 200 men of A Company came face to face with the enemy.

The British troops opened fire and, although heavily outnumbered, they were able to hold the opposition on the other side of the canal while they made a fighting withdrawal.

This was the first day that the Army were involved in fighting on the Western Front and 26-year-old Lieut Anderson became one of its first causalities.

He was killed instantly by a gunshot wound to the head.

Due to the retreat across the bridge his body had to be left behind, but it was buried by the Germans in Hautrage Military Cemetery in Belgium.

His family wanted to mark his life with a memorial.

A tablet to Lieut Anderson was placed in the wall of the newly built St Augustine's Church in honour of his sacrifice and to ensure that his memory would live on.

Resting place: He was buried in Hautrage Military Cemetery in Belgium by Germans.

Medway News 22nd August 2008

Why this man, should be commemorated at St Augustine's Gillingham I do not know but both he and his brother Donald Knox Anderson MC lived in Frindsbury and appear on the Frindsbury memorial along with many other families who lost more than one member in that great conflict.

From Frindsbury and Wainscott: Herbert (1917) and Edward (1918) Butler; Cousins William Charles (1916) and Arthur (1918) Dyson; Frederick Finch (1917) cousin of brothers Walter (1915) and Thomas (1918) Finch; the Fuggle boys Sidney (1916) Percy (1918) and Walter sons of Nelson and Mary Ann.

At Upnor: James Heathcote (1915) possibly his younger brother Albert (1918); brothers James (May 1916) and Joseph (Nov 1916) Stone and the brothers James (Jul 1916) and George (Aug1916) Harrison.

Altogether the villages (as they were then) of Frindsbury, Wainscott, and Upnor lost 76 men in World War One and 28 in World War Two.

The results of my research will be available at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre from 1st November. I have to say that this project has been quite an eye opener to the awful losses we sustained in both these terrible conflicts, and those of us with family members who fought in both wars, whether they lived or died, have plenty to be proud of.

We will remember them.

Visit the new FOMA Website Now!

http://www.foma-lsc.org/

The Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre (FOMA) has a new website, incorporating our quarterly newsletter, *The Clock Tower*. Our thanks go to Alexander Thomas for setting this up and designing it for FOMA.

Alex (pictured in front of the Parthenon at the Acropolis in Athens) is the son of The Clock Tower *Editor, Amanda Thomas. Alex is currently taking a gap year before starting a degree in Archaeology at Bristol University in 2009.*

About The Clock Tower

The Clock Tower is the quarterly journal produced and published by the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre (FOMA), http://www.foma-lsc.org/

Editorial deadlines
The first Monday (or Tuesday when a Bank Holiday occurs) of February, May, August and November. Articles, letters, photos and any information to be considered for inclusion in the journal must be received before this date by the Editor, Mrs Amanda Thomas, 72 Crabtree Lane, Harpenden, AL5 5NS, Hertfordshire; amanda@ajthomas.com

The copy deadline for Issue 13 of *The Clock Tower* is Monday 2nd February 2009.

Publication date
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The Clock Tower is printed by Ray Maisey, Rabbit Hutch Printers, 106 Charles Drive, Cuxton, Kent, ME2 1DU; telephone: 01634 294655; fax: 01634 723510; email: Ray@Rabbithutchprinters.com

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The logo for *The Clock Tower* was designed by Bob Ratcliffe.
The banner design (incorporating the logo) and the title *The Clock Tower* were designed by Alexander Thomas.
The Clock Tower is also available on: http://www.foma-lsc.org/newsletter.html

Further Information
Further information on the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre can be obtained on the MALSC CityArk website http://cityark.medway.gov.uk/ or by writing to Medway Archives Office, Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4AU. Telephone +44 (0)1634 332714; fax +44 (0)1634 297060;
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General enquiries about the Friends can be obtained from the Secretary, Odette Buchanan: 72 Jersey Road, Rochester, ME2 3PE. Telephone: 01634 718231; email: odette_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk
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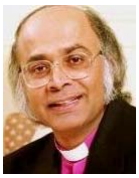

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FOMA Members

Which Mr Baker? or By Nine Votes to Eight

Michael Baker

FOMA member Michael Baker is researching his family history which has many connections with the Medway towns. The following is a part of the story, inspired by the recent article in FOMA by John Witheridge about the fires in Chatham [See The Clock Tower issues 09, February 2008, and 10, May 2008].

Michael and John have been corresponding about the identity of a Mr Baker who was taken to court by the insurers of two buildings for knocking them down to halt the spread of a fire in 1820. A possibility is Samuel Baker Senior, Michael's great- great- great grandfather. However, this article explores another question. In 1812 a new church was built in Strood by a Mr Baker, but which Mr Baker?

In the Medway area in 1812 there were at least three Mr Bakers in the building business:

1. Samuel Baker Senior (1761-1836), aged 50. He was a freeman of Rochester (1785), one of the Cathedral carpenters (1786) and had been a member of the Common Council (1787), Alderman (1795) and Mayor of Rochester (1797 and 1802). He developed a timber merchant and building business on The Common. In 1802-4 he and a Mr Nicholson (probably William 1763-1852, his brother-in-law) were the builders of the Brompton barracks for the Army [1].
2. Samuel Baker Junior (1787-1829), eldest son of the above (1), aged 24. He was apprenticed to his father and became a freeman of Rochester in 1808. He married Mary Smirke in 1816. In 1817 he was referred to as a Gentleman of Hoo when he leased 30 acres of land in Frindsbury from a John Ramsbottom.
3. George Baker (1790-1862), second son of the above (1), aged 22. George was contracted by the Rochester Bridge wardens to erect a temporary bridge structure, to allow two spans of the medieval bridge to be replaced by a single span in 1818 [2].

In 1822 these three Bakers formed a partnership, Samuel Baker and Sons, which prospered from the mid 1820s, and especially in London. The business continued under George and others into the 1870s.

In 1812 the above three Bakers were all of an age to conduct business, but which Mr Baker was involved in the following events at Strood? Early in the 19th century, old Strood church, built by the Morland family in Tudor times, was falling down. A body of trustees decided to rebuild all but the tower. They organised an act of Parliament and appointed Robert Smirke, the fashionable Tory-connected architect from London. Before they could proceed however, they had to obtain title to a chapel, part of the old church, which belonged to the house opposite, St. Peter's Place (later The Gables) on Cuxton Road. The owner of the house and chapel was a Samuel Baker and in 1812 this Baker sold to the trustees his rights to the chapel, for the sum of 5/- plus the right to a pew in the new church for the inhabitants of his house, paving the way for the old church to be knocked down.

Events proceeded with remarkable speed. An Act appointing the trustees was granted on March 25th on the back of a new poor law, the trustees then met and agreed to demolish the old church on April 9th, writing on April 17th to Smirke asking for a design; Baker subsequently sold his rights to the chapel on April 22nd. Some of the trustees wanted to pause and reconsider: wouldn't it be cheaper to repair the old church? On April 30th at a trustees' meeting the objections were heard but

overturned by nine votes to eight. The tower was kept but by December 30th the old church was gone and the first stone of the new church had been laid. The first service was held two years later on October 9th 1814.

Unseemly haste? Henry Smetham, a long-term resident of Strood, writing nearly 100 years later (and my principal source), considered it a travesty. This group of residents had in 1812 obtained an Act of Parliament and appointed themselves trustees [3]. 'They stopped up a wide and commodious and very useful path,' he said, and voted by the slimmest margin to pull down the old church. They went straight to Mr Baker to buy the chapel. Smetham was scathing and added, 'Mr Baker on the 22nd of April 1812, sold his birthright to the Trustees for the mess of pottage as here shown.'

The cost of the new church was £8,500, met by £3,400 borrowed on annuities, £4,200 against the rates and £1,254 subscribed. The debt which landed on the unfortunate rate-payers of Strood was a bone of contention for many years, settled only at the end of the 19th century by a Mr Joseph Stace who left sufficient to pay off the residue. Smetham kept his strongest words for the design of the new building and for the writers of *A History of Rochester*[4], where the new church was described as a 'spacious edifice, bearing marks of elegance and taste.' He retorted:

> Comment upon this mistaken eulogy of a type of architecture supreme in its ugliness is superfluous.

Less than 20 years later the roof was leaking, causing the seats on the north side to be unserviceable. Smetham comments again:

> Mr Baker, contractor, of Rochester (who constructed it) agreed to repair it for £141. Instead he sent in a bill for £221 2s 11d. The Trustees, after delays and many wrathful protestations against it, eventually paid this swollen sum.

So here was another Mr Baker who built the church: who was he? The same who had sold the chapel? Equally, there could be no connection at all. My guess is that Samuel Baker Senior was the builder. He had been known in the district as a carpenter for 25 years and from that had developed his building and timber business. As well as having Brompton barracks to his name, he had had a part, perhaps the major part, in building the Naval Hospital at Deal [5]. Having a substantial business close by, his tender would have been competitive, though he could have supported either of his sons if they had taken the lead. From 1798 to 1814 he owned a wharf on the river at the end of Strood High Street [6]. Finally, it seems unlikely that he who sold the chapel and built the church were one and the same, for if so surely Smetham's tongue would have lashed with even more venom. I have to wonder if it was just a coincidence of names or if it was Samuel Junior who sold the chapel, cooperating to get his father the job.

The name of Baker does not emerge from this episode covered in glory, but if Smetham's evidence that the Bakers were the builders is correct and it is all I have found, it dates their first meeting Robert Smirke to 1812. It was a long and creative liaison. Samuel Baker Junior married his sister Sarah in 1816. In that year too Robert Smirke called in the Bakers to help with foundation problems at Millbank prison on the banks of the Thames. They went on to work together on the foundations of the London Custom House. They built law courts, clubs, houses and churches, but the climax was the British Museum: first the King's Library in 1823, then the west wing (1826-30), the facade (1841) and last the Dome and Reading Room in 1854.

Let us give Smetham the last word. He quoted some lines of 'doggerel found in pulling down some old houses on the High Street' (surely a mask and he wrote them himself?):

WRITTEN AT THE SUPPOSED FINISHING OF ST***D CHURCH.

Wise acts will be produced, when wise men rule the roast,
But such a vice versa case as St***d may truly boast.

Four-and twenty of their men and they are called Trustees,
Have formed themselves a committee, to do just what they please.

They are chosen by their weight of purse, for Wisdom here doth fail,
For sense is often called a curse, when folly does prevail.

They pitied the old church, viewed its crazy crown,
In one of their gigantic acts, resolved to pull it down.

Down came Sm**ke that very man, and what d'ye think to do?
To draw them out a larger plan and build their church anew.

In the next town there is two men, Who in affluence do roll,
They contracted for the Church and that's to do the whole.

Being contract work they rattled on, all for the sake of gain,
They slighted all the holy place, which now lets in the rain.

Their pride and poverty was shown, by building of this church,
their parson saw them into debt and left them in the lurch."

Notes

1. Biographical Dictionary of Civil Engineers 1500 to 1830, ed M Chrimes, 2002, page 32.
2. Rochester Bridge Trust archive B1/372.
3. *History of Strood* by Henry Smetham, 1898, reprinted John Hallewell 1978, pp 62-3 and 74-9. Also his *Rambles round churches in the land of Dickens*, 1929, Volume IV p 56.
4. 2nd edition of a *History of Rochester*, pub Wildash, Chatham, p 254.
5. Centre for Kentish Studies, Q/GAC 2 is a tender by Samuel Baker for the Maidstone gaol, giving Deal as a reference. Edward Holl was the architect. Built 1809-13 with a 500 foot frontage facing the sea, the hospital became the Royal Marines' school of music and was recently converted to private accommodation.
6. Rochester Bridge Trust archive E26/17/004.

The Municipal Buildings, Gillingham

JL Keys

The Municipal Buildings in Upper Gillingham were opened on 25th September 1837 by the Rt. Hon. The Lord Mayor of London, Sir George T. Broadbridge, KCVO, JP and Lady Broadbridge. Built in the Georgian style, the buildings are only now 71 years old, not old as buildings go, but nevertheless, following the unification of the Medway Towns, considered too small today to act as the seat for local government; apparently the Council Chamber is not big enough to house a full council meeting.

The Municipal Buildings, Gillingham; postcard original from the Medway Archives and Local Studies centre Couchman Collection; DE402/21/40

Various uses for the Municipal Buildings have been suggested but it would appear that the site may be put up for sale, in which case it could end up in the hands of a local developer and may even be demolished. This would be a pity because it is a lovely building both inside and out and a fitting memorial to its architect, JL Redfern, FRIBA, M Inst, Cy E, and the Borough Surveyor at the time. In those days it was not considered necessary to employ expensive consultants to carry out feasibility studies before putting the job in the hands of an equally expensive top architect, particularly when a very capable one was already in the employ of the local council. To explain how and why the whole project came into being, it is perhaps interesting to note the speed with which the population of Gillingham grew in the late 19th and 20th centuries. In the 1871 Census the population is recorded as 19,916, but by the 1901 Census it had soared to 42,778. Such rapid growth led to an application to the Crown for a Charter of Incorporation. This was granted in 1903 and the Mayor and Corporation were elected; the first Mayor of the borough was Alderman JR Featherby, JP.

By the mid 1930s the populations was approaching 65,000 and it was becoming increasingly obvious that a new centre of administration was needed to replace the rather scattered offices of the new administration's various departments. For example, the Council Chamber and the Mayor's Parlour were accommodated in the old Technical Institute in Gardiner Street, the Town Clerk's and Borough Surveyor's offices were almost next door. Also in Gardiner Street, separate cottages housed the School Medical Department and the offices of the Education Officer, whilst the Medical Officer of Health was to be found in a converted shop in the High Street. The Borough Treasurer's Department was in an adapted house in Balmoral Road. Any inter-departmental cooperation or communication must have been difficult. A scheme was prepared for the erection of the Municipal Buildings at an estimated cost of £51,000, including furniture and layout, and for the erection of a Town Hall at an estimated cost of £34,000; this latter proposal was subsequently not proceeded with.

On 11th July 1936 a foundation stone was laid by His Worship the Mayor of Gillingham, Councillor HA Tye, JP, CC. As one can see, it took only 14 months for the building to be completed and fitted out. The building contractors were Messrs. F Parham Ltd. of Gillingham whose tender amounted to £41,822.

It must have been a relief to all concerned to have the corporation's offices under one roof.

The ceremony for the laying of the foundation stone ceremony for the Municipal Buildings, Gillingham from the Chatham Observer 17th July 1936; the Medway Archives and Local Studies centre Couchman Collection; DE402/21/41

Shorts Brothers Remembered

Peter Burstow

FOMA member, Peter Burstow, reports on the unveiling of a new heritage plaque in Rochester.

To commemorate the presence of Shorts Brothers at Shorts Reach, the Esplanade, Rochester, a plaque was unveiled on Friday 26th September 2008 by Lord Brabazon of Tara at the entrance to the old sealane works. At the ceremony, distinguished guests included the Mayor of Medway, Cllr David Carr, MP Bob Marshall-Andrews, Medway Council's Chief Executive, Neil Davies, Director of Regeneration and Development, Robin Cooper and Deputy Mayor, Cllr Ted Baker, as well as many former Shorts employees.

The Medway Messenger reported the speech made by Norma Crowe, Local Studies Librarian for Medway at MALSC, and Chairman of The Shorts Brothers Commemorations Society:

"Short Brothers and their workforce were pioneers and during the years they were here in Rochester, they built many innovative aircraft. Working at Shorts had a profound influence on many people in Medway, but until now there has been no public recognition of their incredible achievements in the area. We are very proud of our industrial heritage and hope that the plaque will raise awareness of Short Brothers and the not forgotten roots embedded in Rochester."

The Shorts Brothers plaque at Shorts Reach
Photograph by Peter Burstow

A more detailed photograph of the plaque can be seen in News and Events

Readers' Letters

We welcome letters and emails from readers with their comments. If you have anything you would like to say please write to: Mrs Amanda Thomas, Editor, The Clock Tower, 72 Crabtree Lane, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 5NS or email at amanda@ajthomas.com

18th September 2008

Dear Amanda,

In the last issue of The Clock Tower [issue 11, August 2008] I read with great interest the article by Mr JL Keys, 166 H.A.A. Battery Royal Artillery. I note that he mentions my own article on the Borstal A.A. Battery [issue 09, February 2008].

I would be most grateful if I could have Mr Keys' contact details, as we clearly have much in common!

Yours faithfully,

Peter D. Burstow.

Archives Update

April Lambourne, Archive and Local Studies Officer

Staffing Changes

Our new Archivist, Alison Cable, is due to join the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre (MALSC) in November so, by the time this article is published, some of you may have already met her. Alison has been working as a Senior Archivist with Kent County Council, based at East Kent Archives in Dover and we very much look forward to welcoming her to Medway and having her as part of our team. At the time of writing, interviews have taken place for other recent vacancies so we look forward to being almost, if not completely, back to full-strength by the end of the year. There will however be much ongoing training, not only induction for the new staff but training for all staff on the new Library Management System that will go live in March.

Stocktaking

As always we have ambitious plans for our two weeks dedicated to stocktaking in November and it is always a rush to get everything shipshape before our re-opening date. Much behind-the-scenes work takes place both onsite and at our offsite storage facilities. We have been moving things around again in the searchroom and hope that our users will appreciate the changes that we have undertaken. These have enabled us to create a quieter archives study area that will also be easier for the staff to manage and oversee. In addition, many of our map cabinets and their contents needed repair and maintenance. Stock work on the Local Studies' book stock has also been high on our priorities as housekeeping tasks are necessary on our catalogue prior to migrating records across to our new Library Management System.

Exhibitions and Events

This year's programme has proved very successful and our exhibitions have continued to draw in new people; there has also been excellent attendance at our talks. We are now finalising our plans

for next year's programme, some details of which can be seen in the News and Events section under *Calendar of Forthcoming Events and Exhibitions*.

From 9th December to 3rd February 2009, I am staging an exhibition with Jean Lear entitled, *People's Palaces*, on prefabs and post-war housing in Medway.Thank you to everyone who responded to our appeal for photographs and reminiscences to include in this exhibition.

All the photographs from this and the previous exhibition, *Who? What? Where? When? Unidentified Photographs in the Archives* will be on display during our Mince Pie Day Open Morning on 10th December. Why not catch both exhibitions together and join us for seasonal refreshments and a book sale from 10am to midday. At 2pm we will be joined by the popular speaker, Michael Gandy, who will be giving his talk, Seeing it Through Their Songs. Booking is essential as tickets are expected to sell quickly. Tickets for the talk are £4.00, or £3.00 to FOMA members, available from our new FOMA Secretary, Odette Buchanan, 72 Jersey Road, Rochester, ME2 3PE; telephone 01634 718231; email odette_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk

We look forward to seeing you all - regulars and newcomers alike.

Merry Christmas and a very happy New Year from all the staff at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre!

Please note: you may be experiencing problems with the CityArk website (http://cityark.medway.gov.uk/). We are aware that there is a problem, which has been caused by CityArk reaching its storage capacity. We are awaiting a server upgrade and apologise for any inconvenience.

Sir Cloudesley Shovell and the 1707 Loss of The Association

Norma Crowe, Local Studies Librarian

In the final part of three, Norma Crowe, Local Studies Librarian at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, looks at the events at the end of Sir Cloudesley Shovell's career and shows how great military losses were not confined to the world wars of the twentieth century.

Part Three: The Final Years

It is not possible to do justice to a life so full of incident in an article of this length, and many notable events have been left out. But I feel I must include reference to the storm, which struck in November 1703, and caused massive damage on land and at sea, with the loss of many lives.

Sir Cloudesley Shovell; unsigned but attributed to Michael Dahl; courtesy of the Guildhall Museum, Rochester

After a busy season patrolling and engaging with the enemy in the Mediterranean, most ships of the Fleet had returned to home waters by the late autumn of 1703. On the 24th November, Shovell in the Triumph had anchored in the Gunfleet (off the Essex coast) along with Association, St. George, Cambridge, Russell, Dorsetshire, Royal Oak and Revenge. A mighty storm gathered from the south west on the evening of 26th, which reached a terrifying climax in the early hours of 27th. No storm of such ferocity had hit the British Isles in recorded history. It caused serious damage across southern England, and, because the eye of the storm was over the Downs, many ships – merchant and naval - were damaged or sunk. Cloudesley Shovell had to lose the Triumph's main mast in order to save the ship from running onto a sandbank. The other ships with him at the Gunfleet were driven out to sea, suffering serious damage, but surviving. They were fortunate, because very many lives were lost; some think as many as 2,000.

Admiral Sir Cloudesley Shovell was involved in every campaign of note in the last seven years of his life. He would have spent longer away at sea, had it been possible to find permanent safe anchorage in the Mediterranean during the winter months. The capture of Gibraltar in 1704 was of strategic importance. But still the hunt went on for a home base for the English naval fleet.

The campaign season of 1707 saw Cloudesley Shovell once again in the Mediterranean, and it is perhaps fitting that it was one of his most celebrated, since it was to be his last. His orders were to engage with the enemy and to take Toulon, which had long been the major French port in the Mediterranean. Its location was advantageous, and would be an ideal safe haven for English ships in the winter months. Such a port would remove the need to cease campaigning and to sail for home waters each autumn.

By observing the position of the defences, troops and ships it was hoped to neutralise the French opposition. Numerous councils of war were held on board Association. Cloudesley Shovell and his fellow officers suggested ambitious, daring schemes to trap the French fleet and take the fortified town and dockyard, but they did not seem to have the whole-hearted backing of Duke of Savoy, who appeared reluctant to press home the advantage.

The campaign was partially successful; for although Toulon was not taken, the French fleet was crippled. M. de la Ronciere, a contemporary French historian, wrote, 'Toulon est sauf; mais notre flotte est defunte.' From Toulon Cloudesley Shovell sailed to Gibraltar, and thence, very late in the season, began his final voyage back to England.

After the siege of Toulon, the Anglo-Dutch Mediterranean fleet anchored at Gibraltar. A final council of war for the season was held on board Sir Cloudesley's flagship, Association, on 29th September. A few ships were detailed to remain in the Mediterranean under the command of Admiral Dilkes. The rest, with somewhere around 8,000 men on board, were to return home.

The voyage was hazardous, and this was well known to all involved. The currents in the Bay of Biscay, and avoiding the rocks and islands scattered across the southern and western approaches to the English Channel was a challenge to the most experienced mariner. Navigational charts were used together with constant lookout, regular depth measurements (soundings) and observations of the position of sun and stars. Latitude could be plotted with some accuracy, but longitude could not. The result was that a ship's actual position at sea was often wildly different than its supposed location. In poor weather observational readings were hard to collect with accuracy. In the autumn gales and storms became more frequent. Therefore it was advisable to make the return voyage to England before the onset of the bad weather.

Against his own advice, the Fleet had remained in the Mediterranean for longer than normal. Horace Walpole in the London Gazette of 1st November 1707 later quoted Cloudesley Shovell as stating, *'…that an admiral deserves to be broke, who kept great ships out after the end of September, and be shot if after October.'*

We are fortunate that some 44 logbooks survive recording the voyage home. These give a series of snapshots from officers aboard different ships and when compared they provide a fascinating record of the build-up and aftermath of the disastrous incidents of 22nd October. Setting out on 30th September, the fleet encountered poor weather for much of the voyage with gales, squally storms, followed by calm days and then heavy, low cloud. They ran into 17
a strong north westerly gale on 21st October with poor visibility, which prevented the taking of observations until midday. The Lenox recorded a latitude of 48º.50´ N; the Torbay 48º.57´N and St. George 48º.55´N. Soundings taken indicated that they had reached the edge of the continental shelf, but there was no means of plotting their position with accuracy. Soundings were taken more frequently; once an hour; and the depth recorded was diminishing, which indicated that they were in the Channel approaches.

22nd October was another day of poor visibility; persistent rain, alternating between squalls and drizzle with a strong south westerly breeze. This was to prove their undoing; for in a fearsome following wind with a strong swell, a ship would stand little chance of changing course at short notice to avoid impending hazards spotted by the lookout. Quite why Sir Cloudesley gave the order for the fleet to sail on through this foul weather steering ENE on such a perilous course will remain a mystery. Perhaps fear of worse weather to come coloured his judgement and that of the officers around him. The result was a disaster of shocking magnitude.

About 8pm Association found herself amongst Scilly's Western Rocks. Unlike his narrow escape in 1673, this time no evasive action was possible. The ship struck the Gilstone Ledge and was holed. She foundered, going down with all hands. The Romney also struck the Gilstone and was lost. The Eagle ran onto the Gunner but fared no better. Of the crews of these three ships only one man survived. George Lawrence, a quartermaster on the Romney, was found clinging to a nearby rock the next day. The Firebrand struck the Gilstone, sustained damage, but was lifted clear by the swell. She began to take on water; her fate was clear, but she managed to sail toward the St. Agnes lighthouse before sinking in Menglow Sound. Of her crew, 30 were drowned; just the Captain, lieutenant, boatswain, carpenter, surgeon, and 15 sailors survived. The Phoenix struck the Smith, having mistaken it for another vessel ahead. The ship was holed, but managed to limp into New Grimsby sound between Bryher and Tresco. On 26th October the Lieutenant of the Phoenix wrote, 'This day fair and little wind. This day the Captain, I and all our people went to church to give thanks for the mercies bestowed on us in so miraculous a deliverance.' Other ships were able to take evasive action, or had lucky escapes. The St. George ran onto the Gilstone, but the next wave carried her off again. This bore an uncanny similarity to the near-tragedy experienced by Shovell under Sir John Narborough in 1673.

The names highlighted in bold are those of the ships wrecked on 22nd October 1707:

1st rate: **Royal Anne**, 100 guns built Woolwich Dockyard 1670 as *St. Andrew*; rebuilt and renamed 1703; Flagship of Sir George Byng Vice-Admiral of the Blue; Captain James Moneypenny.
2nd rate: **Association**, 90 guns built Portsmouth Dockyard 1697; Flagship of Sir Cloudesley Shovell; 1st Captain Edward Loades; 2nd Captain Samuel Whittaker. **St. George**, 96 guns built Deptford Dockyard 1688 as *Charles*; rebuilt and renamed 1701; Captain James Lord Dursley.
3rd rate: **Eagle**, 70 guns built Portsmouth Dockyard 1679; rebuilt Chatham 1699; Captain Robert Hancock. **Lenox**, 70 guns built Deptford Dockyard 1678; rebuilt Deptford Dockyard 1701; Captain William Jumper. **Monmouth**, 70 guns built Chatham Dockyard 1666; rebuilt Woolwich Dockyard 1700; Captain John Baker. **Orford**, 70 guns built Deptford Dockyard 1698; Captain Charles Cornwall.
Somerset, 80 guns built Chatham Dockyard 1698; Captain John Price. **Swiftsure**, 70 guns built Harwich 1673; rebuilt Deptford Dockyard 1696; Captain Richard Griffiths. **Torbay**, 80 guns built Deptford Dockyard 1693; Flagship of Sir John Norris, Rear Admiral of the Blue; Captain William Faulkner.
4th rate: **Panther**, 54 guns built Deptford Dockyard 1703; Captain Henry Hobart. **Romney**, 48 guns built Blackwall 1694; Captain William Coney. **Rye**, 32 guns built Sheerness Dockyard 1696; Captain Edward Vernon.
6th rate: **Cruizer**, 24 guns provenance not known; captured from French 1705; Captain John Shales. **Valeur**, 24 guns provenance not known; captured from French 1705; Captain Robert Johnson.
Fireships: **Firebrand**, 8 guns built Limehouse 1694; Captain Francis Piercey (Percy). **Griffin**, 8 guns built Rotherhithe 1690; rebuilt Sheerness 1702; Captain William Holding. **Phoenix**, 8 guns built Rotherhithe 1694; Captain Michael Sansom. **Vulcan**, 8 guns built Rotherhithe 1691; Captain William Ockman. Sloop: **Weazle**, 10 guns built Blackwall 1704; Captain James Gunman. Yacht: **Isabella**, 8 guns built Greenwich 1683; rebuilt Deptford Dockyard 1703; Captain Finch Reddall.

The body of Sir Cloudesley Shovell was washed up on the shore of Porth Hellick, St. Mary's; a simple granite monument marks the spot. Close by were the bodies of his two stepsons, Sir John and James Narborough, Captain Loades and a greyhound. The stern portion of a boat, thought to be Sir Cloudesley's barge, was also washed ashore. It would seem they had time to launch the lifeboat and make for safety. Many tales circulate about Sir Cloudesley's fate. Was he dead by the time he was washed ashore? Did a Scillonian woman from Salakee 'finish him off' in order to steal his emerald ring? Did she confess to the parson years later on her death bed? The answer to these questions may never be known. What is known is the fact that many lives were lost unnecessarily. At least 1,340

men died according to the crew lists. But exactly how many people drowned will never be known, because wives and children were not counted on a ship's roll. Many of the bodies were washed up on St. Agnes, and were buried near Periglis. In the summer of 2007 archaeological excavations were carried out to locate the mass graves. The results of the findings are still being assessed.

The monument at Porth Hellick; photograph by Norma Crowe

The Admiral was initially buried on the beach just above the high tide mark. He was then re-buried further up the beach, and finally exhumed for the journey back to London. A contemporary account recorded in James Herbert Cooke's pamphlet, says that, '….They carried him to Mrs Bant's in the island …Where attempts were made to disembowel and embalm him, but none of the available doctors had the skill to do it.' So Captain Hosier Commander of the Salisbury ordered him on board his ship, wherefore they put him on a bare table, the table was Mrs Bant's and a sheet only to cover him. Once on board he was embalmed and a coffin was made for him. From St. Mary's the Salisbury sailed for Plymouth, arriving in the Sound on 29th October.

Sir Cloudsley was taken to the Royal Naval Hospital on the Citadel, Plymouth, where James Yonge the surgeon records that he embalmed the body and was paid £50.00 for it. The body was placed in a casket, and lay in state in the Citadel for a week; many people came to pay their respects. Then the casket was taken by road to London. The journey took many days, passing through all the major towns along the way, and at every place many hundreds of people came out to pay their respects. Once the cortège arrived in London the body lay for many days in Shovell's town house in Soho. This is said to have been at the Queen Anne's expense.

The tomb of Sir Cloudsley Shovell in Westminster Abbey; contemporary lithograph; original source unknown

The funeral took place on 22nd December in Westminster Abbey, and was a suitably grand affair, attended by ten Admirals; Sir Cloudesley was interred near the Cloister. A year later Grinling Gibbons was paid £322.10s.0d for the monument, a grand work, but not universally liked. The Admiral is portrayed reclining like a Roman, rather than standing proud like the bold, brash man he was. It is said that the monument became the focus of protest by widows and orphans, who held this man responsible for the loss of their loved ones: they expressed their anger by throwing chewed tobacco at his head. Many tributes were written to salute the deeds of this amiable man. The *Secret memoirs of the life of the honourable Sir Cloudesley Shovel, Knight, Admiral of Great Britain,* published in London, 1708, is one such example.

Barely two years after the wreck of the Association a young man was sent to Scilly to try to find out more about the accident, in order that recovery of goods and salvage of the ships might be attempted. Edmund Herbert was just 24 years old. He was described as a gentleman, coming from a good family, and at the time he was unemployed. He arrived in Scilly in 1709, and seems to have been there for about a year. He collected reminiscences, and wrote an account of the days leading up to the disaster, the events as witnessed by islanders and other officers, and the aftermath. Although there are inaccuracies, Herbert provides the fullest account we have of those events. The manuscripts were not published at the time, possibly because the information had been gathered for a consortium which was interested in making a salvage attempt, and therefore did not want the findings made public. It was not until 1883 that one James Herbert Cooke, who was possibly a descendant of Edward Herbert, presented the papers to the Society of Antiquaries, whereafter they were published. Concerning the identification of the body washed up on Porth Hellick Herbert relates, 'Many that saw him said his head was the largest that ever they had seen, and not at all swelled with the waters, neither had he any bruise or scar about him, save only a small scratch above one of his eyes like that of a pin. He was a very lusty, comely man, and very fat.'

Although it is entirely possible that Sir Cloudesley's emerald ring was stolen from his finger by an islander, there is no evidence in Herbert's report that he was killed for it, nor that a woman confessed to the crime on her deathbed. Several other myths have been treated as fact, but actually have no proven factual basis. It is said that the sailing captains of the fleet met to determine their position before proceeding towards, and colliding with, the rocks on 22nd October. But the log books of the captains from other vessels in the fleet make no mention of this rendezvous. Then there is the legend that a sailor, who was a native Scillonian, told Sir Cloudesley that they were sailing directly towards the treacherous rocks of Scilly, and not into the mouth of the Channel as the Admiral had thought. The wretched man was hanged for this insubordination. Such a cruel reward for his speaking up was unlikely; it was out of character for all that we know of the Admiral. And if everyone aboard the Association drowned, and all logs were lost, how is it that we know this, and nothing else of what happened on board in the last few hours?

The loss of so many men, ships and the death of the most celebrated Admiral of the age were truly shocking to the Navy, the Queen and the people of England. An enquiry was launched to find out the causes of this dreadful accident. The reports of surviving officers show that they were surprised to find themselves so far north and east, and tests revealed that most had defective compasses. Of the 112 compasses on the ships only 4 were found to be accurate. There was clearly a need to give approaching vessels early warning of the treacherous outer rocks of Scilly. As a result the number of lighthouses around Scilly was increased, but it was over 140 years before work began on the construction of the Bishop Rock Lighthouse, and many hundreds of tons of shipping were lost in those intervening years.

The 1707 tragedy had a deep and lasting impact. In the spring of 1714 William Whiston, a professor of Mathematics at Cambridge, drew up a petition demanding that a solution to measuring longitude had to be found, and found soon. The petition was signed by many different maritime interests

including the captains of Her Majesty's ships, merchants of London and commanders of merchantmen. It had the desired effect, because in July 1714 the Longitude Act was published. A monetary prize was offered for a workable solution to this complex problem. Strict criteria were laid down and were adhered to closely. The reward for a complete solution was a massive £20,000. Many people competed for the coveted prize, but in the end there was just one serious contender: John Harrison.

Harrison was a self-taught clock maker born in Yorkshire in 1693, who practised in Barrow-on-Humber, Lincolnshire. His meticulous calculations and accurate design and construction were so far superior to those proffered by all other contenders that it is difficult to believe that he was completely self-taught. Over the next 46 years he produced a series of timepieces, which were tested on land and at sea, and were refined as the years went by. Although the Board of Longitude awarded him sums of money to ensure he continued with his quest, Harrison was never declared the winner of the prize they had offered. King George III took a personal interest in his work, and was moved to declare, 'These people have been cruelly treated…By God, Harrison, I will see you righted! The chronometers H4 and H5 were intricate, compact and accurate. A solution to the measurement of longitude had been found.

Many years later interest in locating the wreck of Association was revived. In the 1960s several surveys were carried out by Royal Navy divers and by private concerns, particularly Roland Morris and associates. Wrecks on the Gilstone Ledges were found, and artefacts and coins were retrieved. In the summer of 1967 cannon were brought up. One of these can be seen at Valhalla on Tresco. Other items brought up are on display in the Isles of Scilly Museum. The silver plate, pictured, was retrieved from the seabed in 1968. It is the only item brought up from the site which bears the arms of Sir Cloudesley Shovell, and is therefore of utmost importance. The plate was purchased at auction by Rochester City Council in 1973, for more than £1,000 and today it is on permanent display in the Guildhall Chamber, Rochester.

Silver plate and detail of the same, salvaged from the seabed; courtesy of the Guildhall Museum, Rochester

Events to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the events of 1707 were held in October 2007 at Barnehurst Clubhouse and a plaque was unveiled to indicate that Mayplace had been the home of Sir Cloudesley Shovell. Commemorative events also took place in Cockthorpe, the Isles of Scilly, at the Society of Antiquaries, by his tomb in Westminster Abbey, at Rochester Library, and here at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.
In 1708 Abel Boyer wrote of Sir Cloudsley in his *History of the reign of Queen Anne,* bearing witness to his prowess and skill, and illustrating how he was highly thought of in life and keenly missed in death by Monarch, mariners and all who knew him:

This was the fateful end of one of the greatest sea commanders of our age, or, indeed as ever this island produced; of undaunted courage and resolution, of wonderful presence of mind in the hottest engagements, and of consummate skill and experience: But more than all of this, he was a just, frank, honest, good man. He was artificer of his own fortune, and by his personal merit alone, from the lowest, rais'd himself to almost the highest station in the Navy of Great Britain.

Notes

Much of the information derives from our Archives and Local Studies collections, MALSC and from the Guildhall Museum, Rochester, with special thanks to Steve Nye, Assistant Curator

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Edwin Harris – Recollections of Rochester

Janet Knight, Local Studies, *The Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre*

Janet Knight has worked at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre for over 16 years. She started work as assistant to Pat Salter and later transferred to Local Studies, working with Norma Crowe. Pat Salter's interest in Edwin Harris fired Janet's own enthusiasm and she has become another eager member of the Edwin fan club. Janet is often heard to say, "I wonder what Edwin has to say on the matter…"

In the fifth of her series, and especially for this Christmas issue, Janet reproduces a ghost story from Edwin Harris' 1930 work, Recollections of Rochester.

'No. 155 Eastgate, formerly No. 90, was occupied in the [eighteen] sixties by Mr Richard Russell, gentleman. 90, Eastgate is the reference given in the 1867 directory; it was then a private house. In the 1887 directory it states: Rowlerson, Miss S., school, 90, High-street; in 1890, 90, High-street, Davey, J., tailor; in 1904, 155 High-street, Fletcher, W. And R. Limited, butchers.

No 157, High-street, formerly 91, was for many years in the occupation of Mr Richard Baker of Baker and bells, coach makers. Later Mrs Elliott dwelt there and carried on a ladies' second-hand wardrobe business. The house was afterwards altered into a shop and Frank Chapman, cornfactor, moved from the opposite side of the street to this establishment. This business was purchased by Burgess Bros., corn merchants.

Ghostly Sounds

During the time the house was a private residence a very old lady and her husband lived there. He had been ill for some time, and during his illness he used a walking stick, which was kept at the side of the bed, to knock on the floor when he wanted anything. This was a very common practice years ago.

The old man died during the morning, and the widow sent for her daughter, who was elderly – in fact, she would better have passed as her sister than her daughter. Between 8 and 9 o'clock at night as they were sitting in the back room by the fireside – the dead man was in the room immediately overhead – they were startled by hearing three loud knocks which seemed to come from the room overhead. These sounds continued at intervals, growing louder and apparently nearer. Unable to bear their fears any longer, they both rushed to the front door, screaming...

A policeman happened to be near and he enquired what was the matter. They requested him to go upstairs; he went, but found the corpse quite still and silent. He, too, heard the sounds over his head, however, so he went all over the upper part of the house, and then descending to the back room kept the ladies company until a quarter to ten, when he had to report off duty at the Guildhall; but promised to tell he night policeman of the occurrence. The two frightened women stood at the front door until his arrival, when he went in and stopped a while, but no more sounds were heard.

It was not until a week later that these sounds were accounted for. The house next door was empty, and a wooden-legged man and his wife had been inspecting it, and his wooden leg had sounded loudly as they went from room to room!'

From A Christmas Tree, *illustrated by Robert Ingpen*

The Role of the Cathedral 1640-1660

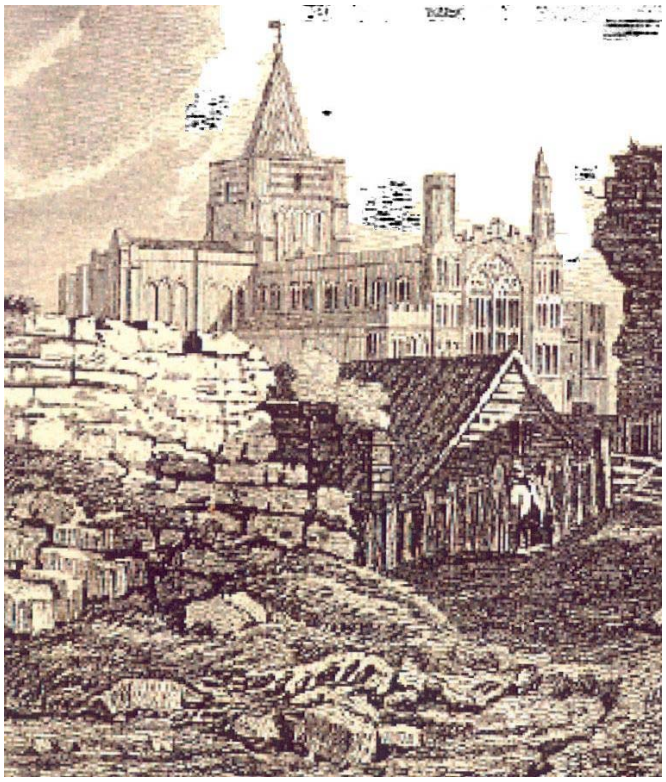
Catharina Clement

In 2005, Catharina completed a BA in history at Canterbury Christchurch University, and then began a part-time PhD in local history entitled Reactions in the Medway Towns 1640-1660. *She is involved in various local history groups and projects such as FOMA, CDHS, and the Victoria County History EPE project, and has recently embarked on a series of talks to local historical societies. Currently Catharina works for Gravesham libraries and acts as a casual assistant at MALSC. During 2009 she hopes to give a paper at either the Institute for Historical Research or the Friends Historical Society on Rochester Quakerism 1655-1918, submitting the same for publication in the* Quaker Journal.

This article is the first in a series of two.

Part One

The general opinion had always been that not much had occurred at Rochester Cathedral between 1640-1660 except for a small amount of 'vandalism' and that the cathedral lay derelict after the dean and chapter was abolished in 1647. Indeed, the Nigel Yates/Paul Welsby edition of essays, *Faith and Fabric,* gave only minimal coverage to this period of upheaval. Yates concluded that after 1647 the cathedral had no spiritual role or preaching ministry, yet my research paints perhaps a slightly different picture.



Rochester Cathedral 1717; Shrubsole and Denne, printed 1717

Archbishop William Laud appointed John Warner to the bishopric of Rochester in 1637 allegedly as a direct result of his sermon of 1635 exposing the Puritan threat. He was to preach a controversial sermon in Rochester cathedral in 1639, printed in 1640, which was both anti-Scottish and anti-Puritan in nature. In a town so close to the more radical dockyard of Chatham this could only be considered a very provocative sermon. Thus Warner as a pro-Laudian had the cathedral under his grip ensuring it was behind Charles I in 1640.

On the eve of civil war in August 1642 Parliamentarian forces took control of Rochester and carried out acts of iconoclasm, the removal of religious imagery, and in particular that associated with Catholicism. The description of the destruction was obviously dependent on the viewpoint of the writer. The Parliamentarian newssheet the *Perfect Diurnall* reported that on Wednesday 24th August 'being Bartholmew Day, before we marched forth some of our souldiers…went to the Cathedrall about 9 or 10 of the clock, in the midst of their superstitious worship… they (owing their

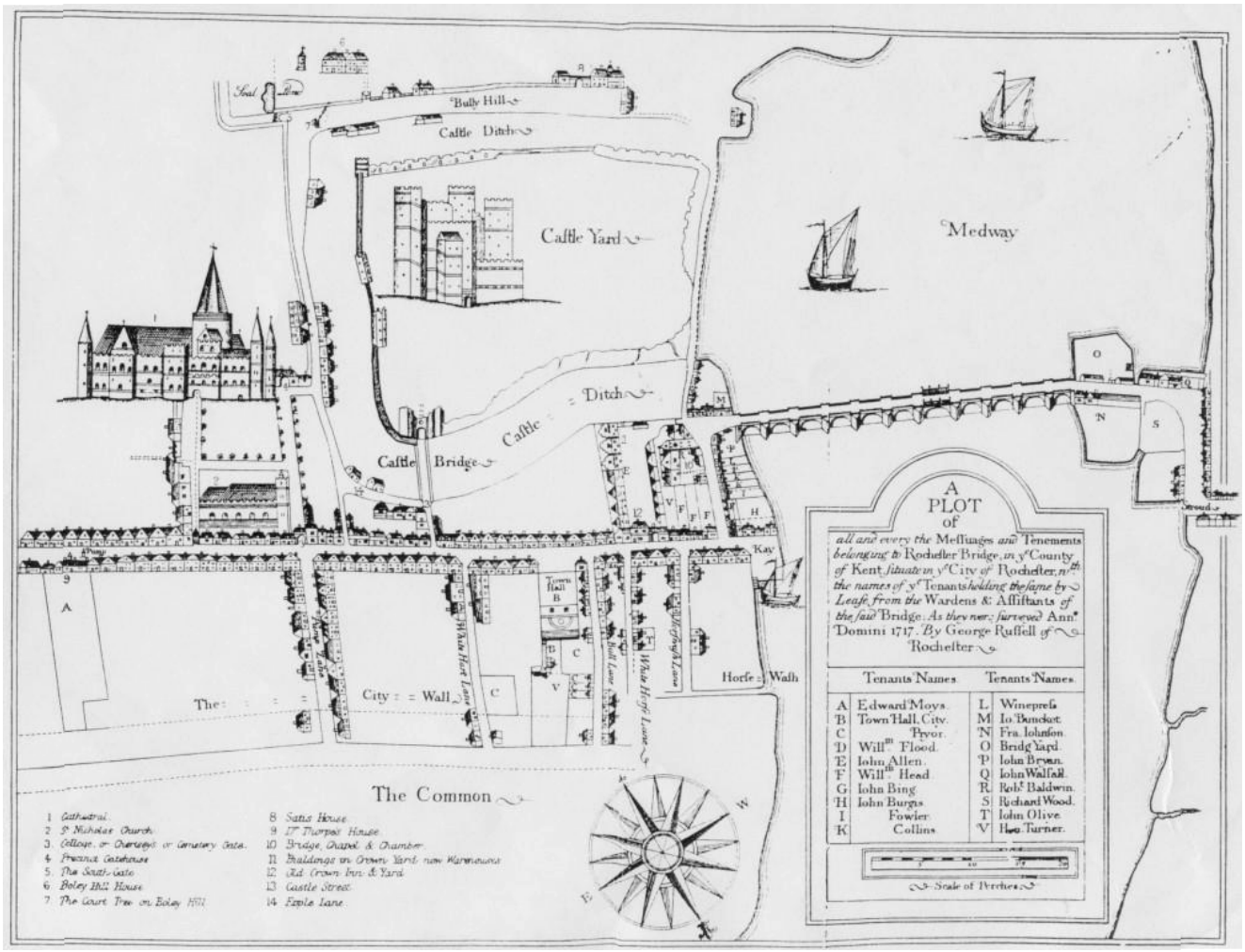
no reverence) marched up to the place where the Altar stood… First they removed the Table to its place appointed, & then tooke the seate which it stood upon being made of deale board, having two or three steps to goe up to the Altar, & brake that all to pieces, it seems the Altar was so holy, that the ground was not holy enough to stand upon: This being done they pluckt down the rails, and lefte them for the poore to kindle their fires…'.

The stress here was on the removal of the altar to the centre of the cathedral and destruction of the altar rails, which Puritans felt distanced the congregation from God. John Walters in an article on iconoclasm used the Rochester example to illustrate his opinion that there were 'strong ideological associations between the railing of the altar and representations of enclosure…'. The Rochester minute books record an instance of rioting against enclosure at the Common in 1641. Was there a parallel as Walters claims between these two types of incidents? Julie Spraggon has suggested that most of the iconoclasm was carried out by the soldiery in conjunction with the local people. A Royalist account from *Mercurius Rusticus* indicated that a 'multitude' had gathered to witness events and thus it is possible that this 'multitude' may have egged on the soldiery and encouraged them to dispose of the altar rails in the above fashion. If this was the case then the common people had an understanding of the ideological issues and could draw comparisons.

Royalist reaction to the iconoclasm was that of an act of 'vandalism' and not untypical of a *Sun* headline today: *The Cathedrall Church of Rochester violated.* The report from *Mercurius Rusticus* noted that the Parliamentarians broke up objects they felt smacked of 'Popery and Innovation'. However their coverage was more graphic and sensational, 'They brake down the raile about the Lord's Table, or Altar, call it which you please; and not only so, but most basely reviled a now Reverend Prelate…they seized upon the Velvet Covering of the Holy Table, and in contempt of those holy Mysteries which were Celebrated on the Table, removed the Table it selfe into a lower place of the Church…And to shew what Members they are of the Church of England, they strowed the Pavement with the torne mangled leaves of the booke of Common-Prayer…'. John Lorkin, the dean in 1642, was shot at and they almost 'murdered him at the very Altar.' This sensational reporting tried to put Lorkin on a parallel with Thomas Becket. However even Royalist accounts found the damage minimal compared to elsewhere. Current church historians often portray this period and incident as 'wanton destruction', but context is vital to understanding why these actions were taken. Puritans contended that church imagery went against the second commandment and that Elizabeth I had only partially reformed the Anglican church.

To a degree we have verification of what was actually damaged from the *Red Book* and cost of repairs on the Restoration. In 1662 it was estimated that the total cost of bringing the cathedral back to its former glory would cost approximately £14,000. Although it would appear that no physical damage was done to the tombs in 1642 the replies to Warner's visitation of 1662 describe 'That the Tombes Gravestones & other monuments of the dead are much defaced by the violence of the late rebels both in the stoneworke and pulling downe of iron worke which iron worke was taken downe & sold by John Wyld a shoemaker in Rochester,' thus implying that these acts were carried out after 1642. But Lieutenant Hammond's tour of England's cathedrals in 1635 described 'Her Monuments are but few…(some were) so dismembered, defac'd and abused…'. Hence although some of this damage may have been carried out during the civil war there is much credence to be placed on the view that most of this was already done at the Reformation. The Royalist newssheet mentioned in 1642 that Seaton on hearing the organ 'cryed *A Devill on these Bag-pipes'*. Although the Parliamentarians went back to destroy the organ it had been removed by the dean and chapter, but was by 1645-6 obviously viewed as an asset worth selling by the KCC, as 6s was 'Paid to Robert Paule for drawing a modle of the orgaines of the said Church to demonstrat unto some Merchants the manner thereof the better to make Saile thereof'.
The cathedral chapter was the subject of heated debate in the period 1640-3 at both parliamentary and local level. The 'root and branch' petitioners wanted the removal of the bishops, which would

make the role of the cathedral and its chapter redundant. Bishop Warner seems to have tried to distance himself from the troubles, once Laud was accused of high treason in 1640. It would appear from the records that Warner was conspicuous by his absence from the cathedral after 1642 and Lee-Warner felt he left the diocese in late 1642 and went into exile. However his own correspondence dates his departure from Kent to around the latter part of 1643 and he cites various reasons for leaving; however financial ones are the most pressing: 'But that which more nearly moved me to depart was, that being assesses in Kent (September 1643) for the 20th part, £500, and because of the first demand I was unable to pay the same…'. He, therefore, has little spiritual compunction in abandoning his bishopric, leaving the chapter to its own devices.



A map of Rochester, dated 1717; Shrubsole and Denne, printed 1717

Not Forgotten

Irina Shub, Local Studies Librarian

Irina joined the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre team in 2005. Originally from St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad) in Russia, she has always been fascinated by the English language and history. Throughout her career as a librarian, she has worked in various libraries, and when she and her family moved from London to Medway she applied for the position of a Local Studies Librarian at MALSC.

One day a print-out from a local newspaper appeared on my desk. The title of one of the articles was *Lieut. Albert Isaacs*, and it reported on the funeral of the lieutenant, describing him as a 'victim of the Old Brompton tragedy'. The funeral had taken place at the cemetery of the Jewish Synagogue, High Street Rochester. There was neither a date, nor the name of the newspaper. My professional curiosity was aroused – I was collecting material on the Jewish community in Medway [see Irina's article in *The Clock Tower* Issue 03, August 2006], which includes Rochester; and the unravelling of this intriguing story began.

One clue that gave away the date of publication, lay in the name of the Rabbi officiating at the funeral: Rev. Fenton was the resident rabbi in the area between 1903 and 1919. Further, the presence of the Middlesex Regiment at the funeral, pointed to 1914-1918 when the Medway Towns served as a base for various regiments during the Great War. However, Lieutenant Isaacs wasn't mentioned in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission database for casualties, nor did he have a Medal Index card [see The National Archives website http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/]; he was not commemorated in the *Roll of Honour* in the *British Jewry Book of Honour*[1], nor was he mentioned in the list of officers who died in the Great War 1914-1918 (HMSO 1917). His name seemed to have been obliterated from most of the primary sources of the Great War, and my visit to the National Archives produced a negative result - there seems to be no information on Isaacs' war records. Nevertheless, in conjunction with Martin Sugarman, Harold Pollins and Saul Issroff, I managed to piece together the sad story of a bright man who was eager to help the country yet who was hurt and felt a deep sense of rejection. This feeling played so much on his mind that the only way he saw of redeeming himself was to sacrifice his life, to end it by his own hand, by shooting himself. This article commemorates Lieut. Albert Isaacs, whose name and life have been forgotten for 90 years though he served in several British military campaigns and became a victim of the Great War.

The death certificate of Albert Isaacs discloses he was 37 years old, from the 5th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment, and died on 2nd September 1917. A burial register for the Jewish cemetery states that the burial, attended by his relatives, members of the Middlesex Regiment and several South African officers took place on 6th September.
However, there is no extant headstone on Isaacs' grave in the synagogue cemetery. The *Chatham Observer* and *Chatham News*, both dated 8th September, revealed a full report of the inquest into the death of the Lieutenant.

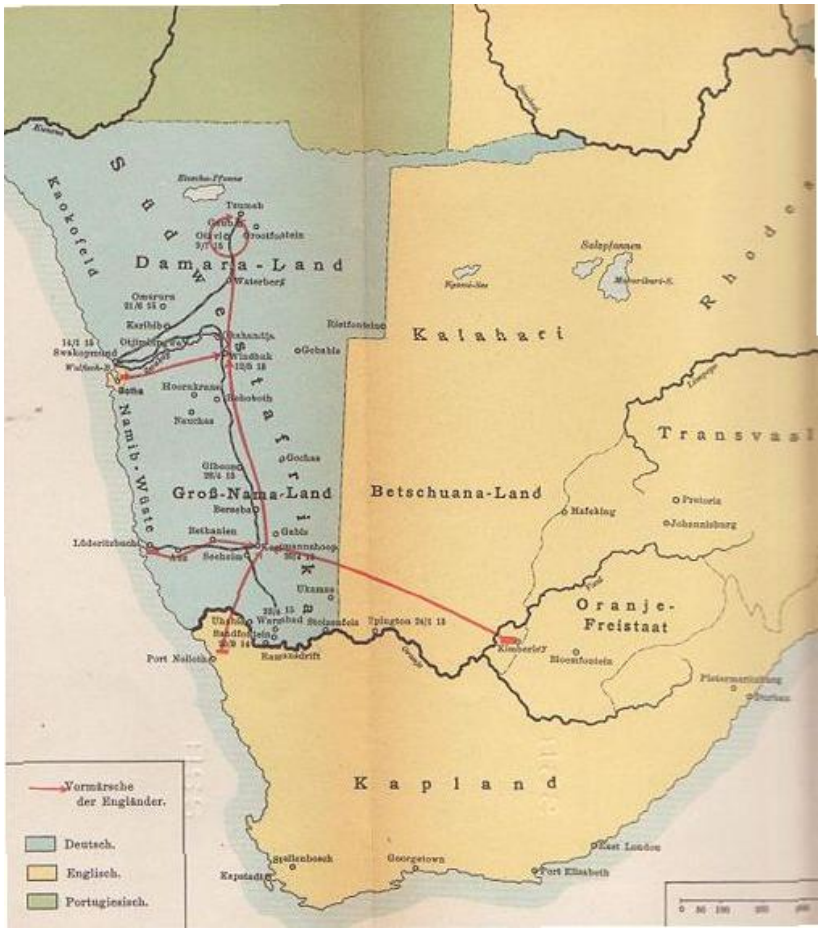
Albert Isaacs was born in 1880, a son to Pauline, 27, a German national, and Samuel Isaacs, who was Jewish. The family lived in the agricultural town of Vryburg, situated in the North West Province of South Africa, halfway between Kimberley and Mafekeng and famous for the Du Toits Pan diamond mine. Sadly, Pauline died the following year when Albert was just a year old, though his father soon remarried, and the boy was brought up in the Jewish tradition by his father and step-

mother. Later Albert became a member of the Johannesburg Stock exchange, and went on to become their chief book-keeper; as a young man he took part in the Second Boer War (1899-1902).

At the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, both the South African and British governments were aware of the importance of South Africa's border with the adjoining German controlled territory. It was crucial to invade German South West Africa (Namibia), However, as South Africa experienced a considerable degree of sympathy for the German cause among the Boer population (due to German support for their national independence during the Second Boer War twelve years earlier), an invasion was delayed. Lieut. Col. Maritz, head of the commando forces, together with several other high ranking officers, rapidly raised about 12,000 rebels ready to fight for a 'Free and Independent South Africa, Free from British Control', which became known as the Maritz or Boer Revolt. The government, under the command of Generals Louis Botha and Jan Smuts, declared martial law in October 1914 and the rebellion was successfully suppressed by early 1915.

In January 1915 several forces were raised and made ready to attack German South West Africa. The Eastern Force under command of Col. Berange was concentrated in Vryburg. Albert Isaacs joined one of its units, Cullinan's Horse brigade. Cullinan's Horse brigade was originally raised on 8th January 1901 in the Second Boer War with the authority of the military Governor Lord Methuen and was employed in the Warrenton-Vryburg-Kuruman district and in the south west of the Transvaal during the last 16 months of the War. The unit saw much hard work and a lot of fighting. It is quite possible that Isaacs served with this unit during his service in the Boer War as well, as it was local to his native town of Vryburg.

It is unclear whether he joined the unit as a lieutenant, or got promoted through merit. He participated in the invasion of the German South West African colony, the second largest. Cullinan's Horse was meant to surprise the Germans from the east, across the Kalahari Desert from Vryburg through Rietfontein on the way up through Keetmanshoop and Windhuk to Luderitz.



1915, South-West Africa Campaign; wikipedia.com

According to the memoirs of one of the soldiers who took part in the same campaign, the physical conditions of the troops were challenging: the heat during most hours of the day was pretty unbearable, while water supplies were scarce – 'a wash is a luxury, and washing clothes is an impossibility... Another trying thing is fine sand and dust. The hot wind that blows from about noon till 7 or 8 sends it in clouds so thick that tents only 20 or 30 yards away are blotted out of sight. This sand gets into the tents and smothers everything, including the food and water... During the afternoon winds the dirt gets caked thick on you, and anyone with an ounce or two of water left for a wash is considered a lucky dog. We're quite in a desert, and as far as one can see right to the distant hills, there is nothing but sand and stones.'

The operation ended on 9th July 1915 with the capitulation of the last commander of the Schutztruppe – Franke. It was the only campaign in the First World War, which was planned, executed and successfully completed by a British dominion.

During the action Isaacs established himself as a translator, having cooperated with the Intelligence Staff, and rendered most valuable assistance, using his first language to translate captured German papers into English. In 1917, he applied to the War Office for a position as an interpreter, and was commissioned to join the army with the rank of lieutenant.
According to the *Supplement to the London Gazette* for 27th August 1917 and the *Army List for September* 1917, Lieut. Albert Isaacs, together with a group of another six officers from the South African Defence Force, joined the 12th Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment on 24th June 1917. He arrived in England on 27th July, and was drafted to the regiment on 23rd August 1917. On a temporary basis he was attached to the 5th Reserve Battalion of the same regiment, which was stationed in Gillingham. The 12th (Service) Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment was formed in Mill Hill, London, in August 1914 as part of the Second Kitchener's army. In September 1914 it was attached to the 54th Brigade of the 18th Eastern Division, which served on the Western Front from spring 1915, taking part in most of the significant actions in France. In total, the Division suffered more than 46,500 casualties during the Great War, of whom 13,727 died. The 12th Battalion was disbanded in France on 13 February 1918.

At the beginning of the war, the Middlesex Regiment was stationed in the Barnsole Road School, but very soon compulsory billeting was introduced, and the men were distributed amongst the local population. Members of the regiment were billeted in the same neighbourhood, so each morning after breakfast they could assemble for drills in the nearby streets. 'They would march off to training grounds outside the town.'[2]

During those last days of August Isaacs took drills, which he found awful. He attended two or three interviews in London, but was turned down due, in his own mind at least, and perhaps in fact, to his family origins. Baldwin also states that the war created many local spy scares – Medway was known for its naval and military bases. Quite frequently those scares involved innocent people, whose foreign-sounding names or known foreign descent put them under suspicion. Isaacs clearly fell within the second category: his mother was German, and he spoke German better than English. Isaacs brooded over his rejections. He tried to resolve the situation by speaking to one of the training instructors of the officer's class, and explaining himself. He stated that he felt he was in a false position, for although he was an interpreter and knew German better than English, he was repeatedly being turned down, because his mother was German. He knew nothing about infantry work, and felt that he was more inefficient in it than even the rawest recruit. He was offered a job as a miner, listening out for German miners and tunnellers in the trenches, but that position did not attract him. Isaacs wanted to be an interpreter. The instructor suggested persevering, which did not ease the situation. Every day Isaacs became more and more agitated and complained a lot about not being able to get away from infantry life. The army clearly wasn't interested in utilising his best

skills. On 1st September he wrote several letters, which he stamped but did not post. In a letter to his father Albert wrote that things 'turned out so differently to my expectations'.

On Sunday 2nd September Isaacs arrived to the Queen's Head Hotel at 1.45pm for his lunch. It was his third visit to the hotel - their cooking was definitely better than in many other places. He quickly had his meal and left the place before 2.30. At 6.30pm he returned for his dinner. In the bar he had half a bitter and dry ginger and then proceeded to a private room where he ate his meal in solitude while reading. At five minutes to nine Isaacs asked the manageress of the hotel whether he could have a wash and was shown to
the bathroom on the first floor. To everyone who saw him that evening he looked normal though rather quiet. It was not obvious that under this pretended quietness and calmness Isaacs was deeply suffering from immense stress and a combination of emotions – being rejected and wasted in the army, hurt, feeling under suspicion on account of his excellent knowledge of German, his detestation of infantry work and a sense of total helplessness in the situation. Unable to find a satisfying solution, at 9.30pm Isaacs fired three shots into his chest through an opening in the front of his tunic. He was found still conscious by an officer from a neighbouring regiment. As the latter rushed out to call for a doctor, yet another black thought descended upon Albert. He was a failure, incapable even of killing himself. What had he done? There was no future. The officer had not seen the revolver, and Lieut. Albert Isaacs fired two more shots through the same wound. The death certificate states the cause of death as, 'shooting himself during temporary insanity'; the inquest verdict, 'suicide during temporary insanity'.

I was unable to find any statistical data on cases like this among soldiers in general and among Jewish soldiers in particular. The reason is that according to the Army Act 1881, Section 38, the attempt to commit suicide was treated as a criminal act. As a result, suicides were covered up by the officials – the deceased were declared temporarily insane, thus automatically being excluded from the official, mainstream statistics. An interesting fact is that records of this and similar cases did not survive. Were they destroyed deliberately or is it just a coincidence? Whatever the reason, these cases need special attention: people don't take their lives on a casual whim. From my research into two of such individual stories, the people concerned endured unbearable stress, personal trauma of high intensity, and the world seemed so bleak that the only way out appeared to be suicide. We celebrate heroes and remember them, but we should not forget these unusual ones, who were also casualties of the war. They should be remembered, not allowed to slip through the net, to be ignored and forgotten.

This year as we commemorate the 90th anniversary of the Armistice, I am very pleased that we can obtain closure in one more case and remember Lieutenant Albert Isaacs.

An e-mail from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission from 19th May 2008 advised that Lieut. Albert Isaacs had been added to the list of casualties of the Great War. A new headstone will be erected in the cemetery of the Chatham Memorial Synagogue, Rochester, Kent.

This article would have not been written without the indispensable help of Martin Sugarman, the Archivist of Jewish Military Museum of AJEX; Dr. Saul Issroff, an Hon Vice President of the Jewish Genealogy Society of Great Britain, and Harold Pollins, a retired Senior Tutor of Ruskin College, Oxford.

Queen's Head Hotel, Brompton, 1927; courtesy of Roy Murrant

Notes

[1] *British Jewry Book of Honour*, in the list of those who served in the Middlesex Regiment

[2] Baldwin, Ronald A. The Gillingham Chronicles. (1998). Rochester: Baggins Book Bazaar; p.281

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Archives of the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre

STROOD TO CANTERBURY 150

Bob Ratcliffe

Bob Ratcliffe is a retired architect. He is President of The City of Rochester Society and a local historian; Bob is also a FOMA committee member.

This article, the first of a series of three, is based on the commemorative exhibition held at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre (MALSC) in August-September 2008.

Part One

Introduction

2008 marks the 150th anniversary of the opening of the railway line from Strood to Faversham. There had been railways in Kent before 1858. Indeed, the first railway in the world to operate regular locomotive-hauled passenger trains was that between Canterbury and Whitstable which had opened on 4th May 1830, and the first main line in the county was that of the South Eastern Railway (SER), linking London with Dover via Redhill and Tunbridge, later Tonbridge, in 1844. The *railway manias* of the 1840s had proposed many other lines, and the SER itself had reached Thanet and Hastings by 1846 and 1851 respectively. By 1856 the SER had also completed a circuitous route down the Thames from London to Strood, and thence up the Medway through Maidstone to join the main line at Paddock Wood. This left the empty area east of the Medway, an area that was well served by the Dover Road and by coastal and river traffic.

The SER had proposed a line from Strood to Faversham and Dover in 1847, but it was the proposers of an East Kent Railway (EKR) who finally gained Parliamentary approval in 1853 for their line from Strood to Canterbury. As proposed, both ends would be joined with the existing lines of the South Eastern, and no doubt the directors of that company anticipated that they would take over the East Kent company once the line was built. They were to be sadly disappointed. By 1859 the little EKR had obtained approval for extensions east to Dover and west to London, and had changed its name to the London, Chatham and Dover railway. The stage was set for a forty year feud between the two companies.

An exhibition at MALSC in August 2008 told the story of those early days, and continued with the later history of the railways of Kent insofar as the line from Strood to Canterbury was concerned. In 1858 this line revolutionised travel in North Kent, hitherto reliant either on coastal shipping or on the stage coaches and waggons that trundled along Watling Street. The fastest of the stage coaches achieved a speed of 10 mph, while the
early railways advanced this to 40 mph. Today our Electrostars can reach 100 mph, and the 395 Javelins, to be introduced next year, will be reaching 1501 mph on their run over High Speed 1 between Ebbsfleet and St Pancras International, a far cry from those early days 150 years ago.

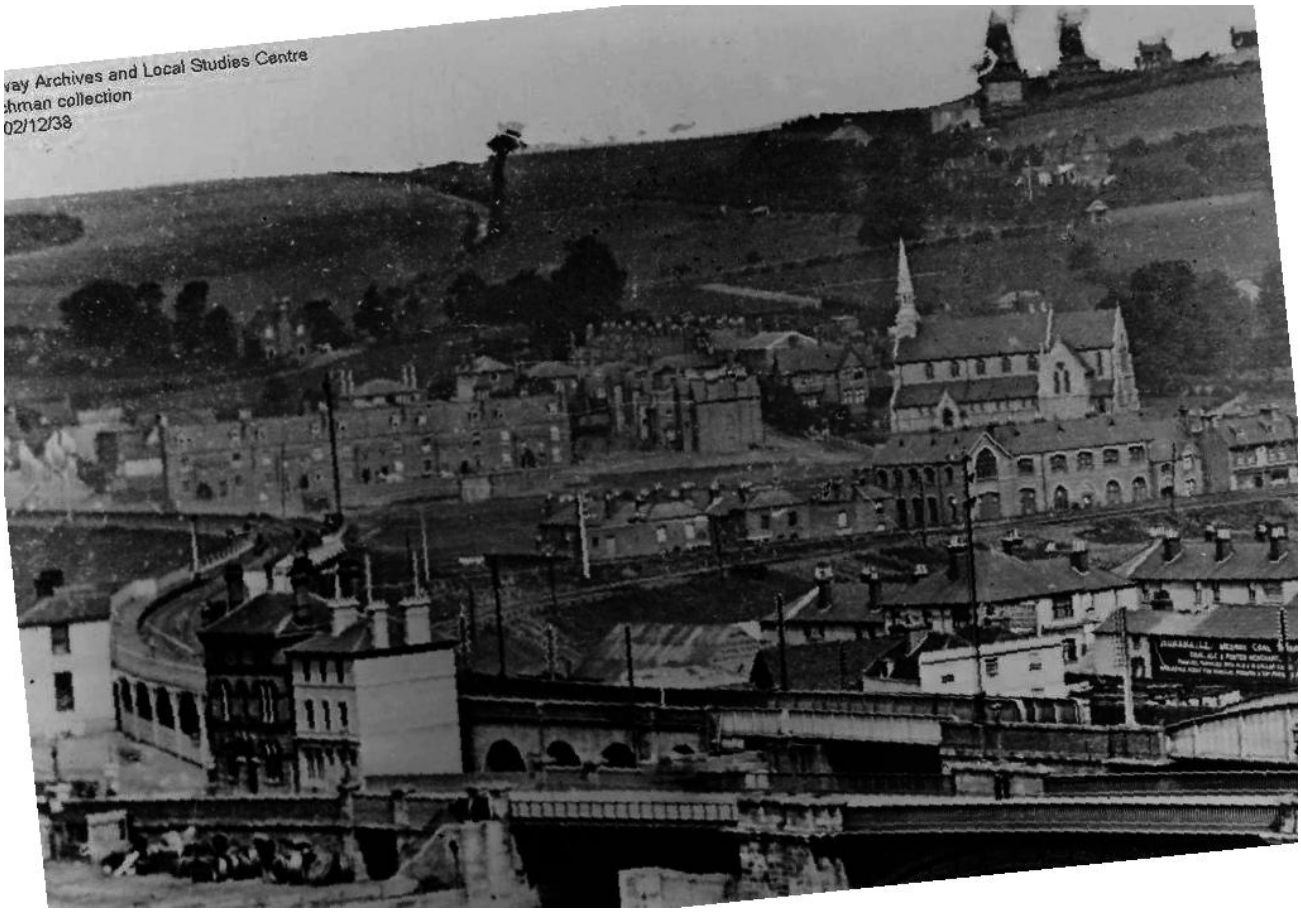
The Coming of the Chatham...

By 1858 Strood was already connected to London by the lines of the South Eastern Railway, both via Maidstone and Paddock Wood, opened in 1856, and via Gravesend and Dartford, opened in 1849. Between Strood and Higham, this latter route had made use of the canal tunnel of the Thames and Medway Canal Company which had been completed in 1824 to enable shipping to avoid the long haul round the Isle of Grain. As a canal it had failed, but the tunnel was a useful asset in the development of a railway.

The original station at Strood had been in Canal Road, opposite the Canal Tavern which was renamed The Railway Tavern. Today it is the Riverside Tavern, but better known to the locals as The Red Brick. With the opening of the line from Maidstone a new station was built on the present site. The architect's drawing shows that it was originally intended to have been built of stone but, perhaps because of financial restraints, it was built of timber; it survived till 1973.

The line of the East Kent Railway left that of the South Eastern at the south end of Strood Station, swinging east and climbing to a plate girder bridge over the Medway. To minimise disruption to river traffic it had been decreed that this bridge had to be built close to the then new road bridge, and had to have an opening span. Once on the Rochester side of the river the line was built on an embankment across marshland to the east of the city before tunnelling under Fort Pitt to a station at Chatham. Two more tunnels and the intervening viaduct over the Luton valley brought the line onto the fairly level land above the south bank of the Medway. Stations were sited at Chatham, New Brompton (now Gillingham), Rainham, Sittingbourne, Teynham and Faversham. A station at Newington was to come later, while the original idea of a station at Rochester was dropped. Originally single throughout, it opened from Chatham to Faversham on 25th January 1858, the link to Strood being delayed by non-completion of the bridge until 13th March. It was another eighteen months before the line on to Canterbury was opened on 9th July 1860, to be followed ten days later by the branch from Sittingbourne to Sheerness. By this time the directors of the newly named London, Chatham and Dover Railway (LCDR) had obtained approval for a line to Dover, and the idea of a junction with the SER at Canterbury was abandoned in favour of an alignment to the south of the city and on to the coast, Dover being reached in 1861.

At the Strood end, the Directors of 'the Chatham' looked for an independent route to London in order to avoid the transfer of their traffic to the rival South Eastern. This they achieved by the construction of their own line up the Medway and Bush valleys and across the high land through Swanley to Bickley, whence running rights over other companies' lines gave them access to Victoria Station in London. With the opening of this route in 1860 the link at Strood fell into disuse.



A view of the railways through Strood and Frindsbury; the approach to the bridge is to the right of the photograph.

From the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre Couchman Collection. Strood Extra and Frindsbury Intra. Copy of photograph of Strood Extra (north-west) and Frindsbury Intra looking north-west from Rochester Castle keep, showing clockwise from top left, Yoke Farm (Yoke House from c.1900), Frindsbury Road, Stonehorse Lane, Broom Hill, The Great Mill and The Little Mill, St. Mary's Church and Vicarage, Station Road Board School, Canal Road, Horsnaill's Medway Coal Wharf, Rochester railway and road bridges, Strood Esplanade, restaurant and hairdresser's shop, High Street and Railway Hotel and Rochester Bridge Tavern adjoining and Strood Esplanade. 7" x 5" (178mm x 126mm) Original exposed c.1879 x c.1890 p.38; ref.,DE402/12/38.

Some Old Roffensians

Simon Shreeve, Honorary Editor, *The Old Roffensian*

The Old Roffensian Society (the Society), which represents the interests of all former pupils of King's School, Rochester, has among its publications The History of King's School, Rochester *(Edited by Richard L H Coulson, 1989),* Eminent Roffensians *(Compiled by Brian Nolan, 4th Edition, 1998) and* Roll of Honour of Old Roffensians and Old Choristers of Rochester Cathedral who gave their lives in the Great and Second World Wars *(2006) to which reference should be made.*

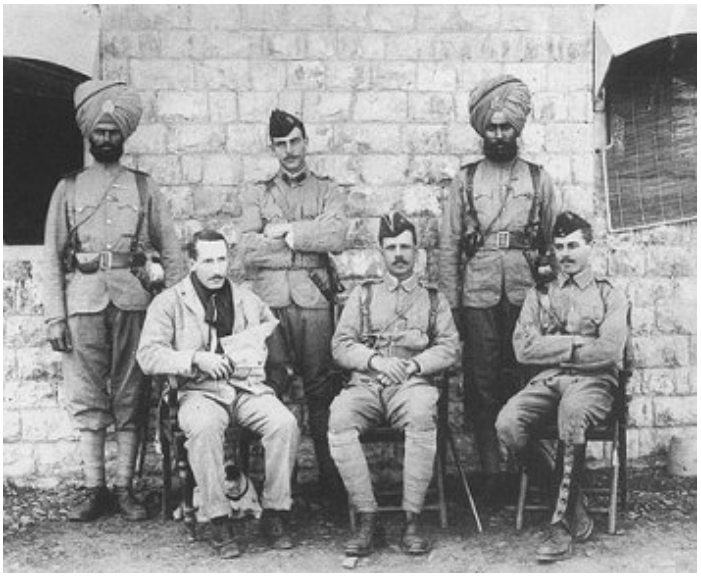
This second article in a series of three describes the contribution of Old Roffensians to the armed services. It is the Society's convention that the letters OR *followed by year or years in brackets means Old Roffensian with the qualifying years, that is those spent at the School as pupils.* KS *means King's Scholar, the holder of a scholarship awarded by the School in favour of attendance thereat.*

Part II: The Armed Services

While the present School has some 650 pupils, the numbers were considerably less in the latter part of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries. The School had just 66 pupils in 1866, rising to 80 by 1914 and only exceeded 100 after the Great War. At the start of the Second World War the numbers had reached 248. The service given and the sacrifices made by Old Roffensians are thus all the more significant. The School's Officer Training Corps (later the Combined Cadet Force) played a vital role in preparation for armed service, particularly before the Great War.

The area of the North West Frontier, which remains unsettled to this day, was the scene of the Mohmund and Tirah Expeditions of 1897-98 which were a response to attacks on British frontier posts and damage to life and property by local tribes. Seven Old Roffensians were involved in the Expeditions, among them Surgeon-Captain Cedric Barclay Prall OR(1880-87) who survived the siege of Fort Gulistan in September 1897. During the ensuing Tirah campaign, which involved 35,000 British and Indian troops, Captain Frederick Robert McCrae De Butts OR(1872), commanding an Indian mountain battery, was killed in action at the Sampagna Pass.

Some 25 Old Roffensians fought on the British side during the Boer War between 1899 and 1901. Major Claude Houston Stuart (later Stuart-French) OR(1883-84), who had seen action in the Transvaal, Natal and Orange River Colony, was present at the Relief of Ladysmith in February 1900 as were three other ORs. Captain Henry Jamieson Powell Jeffcoat DSO OR(1882-87) was killed in action at Tafelkop in 1901.



Fort Gulistan, North West Frontier during the siege of September 1897. Surgeon-Captain Prall OR is standing between the Sikh officers.www.britishempire.co.uk

Away from scenes of conflict, Lieutenant Charles Henry Adair RN OR(1862-64) served on the corvette, *HMS Bacchante* throughout its world cruise of 1880 to 1882 during which Prince Albert Victor and Prince George of Wales (later King George V), the sons of the future King Edward VII, trained as Naval Cadets. And Major Gilbert George Herbert Cooke AFC DFC OR(1895-1901) navigated His Majesty's Airship R34 on its historic return flight from Scotland to Long Island in the United States of America and back to England in July 1919.

The School's Memorial Board in the foyer of the School Hall and the Memorial Tablet in the Lady Chapel of Rochester Cathedral have the names of 68 Old Roffensians who died during the Great War. Many died on the fields of France and Flanders and are buried in local war cemeteries still so admirably maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Lieutenant Charles Henry Bearblock OR(1903-04) was killed in action on the last day of the Battle of Loos in October 1915 and was buried in Vermelles British Cemetery. His name, previously omitted, was added to the Cathedral tablet during 2007 and in time for the Service of Remembrance which was attended by his great-nephew, Christopher Bearblock. 2nd Lieutenant John Winckworth Bailey RFC OR(1894-96) was killed in a flying accident at Northolt Aerodrome in March 1916. He was the son of Rev John Bailey, Chaplain of St Bartholomew's Hospital in Rochester from 1878 to 1933. Captain Terence Anthony Chaworth Brabazon OR(1907-13), distantly related to the Earls of Meath and the Barons Brabazon of Tara, was severely wounded on the first day of the Battle of the Somme. Invalided back to England, he died at Wilton House, a private hospital for officers, in August 1916 and was buried in Wilton Cemetery. A silver cup in his memory was presented to the School by his father for the winner of the mile race which is still run annually, albeit as a Preparatory School event.

The grave of 2nd Lt John Winckworth Bailey RFC OR in the churchyard of St Martin, Ruislip. Photograph by Simon Shreeve

A record of Old Roffensians totalling 596 who served in the Second World War was prepared in 1950 but not published. 139 were with the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Merchant Navy, 315 with the Army and 101 with the Royal Air Force. The School commemorates the lives of 55 serving Old Roffensians who died during the war and there is a Memorial Tablet in the Cathedral Lady Chapel. Many were lost in naval battles and as in the Great War they have no other grave than the sea. Two Old Roffensians, Commander John Michael Hogan (1922-24) and Lieutenant Thomas Gordon Putt Luxmoore (1925-26), Flag Officer's Secretary, died with the sinking of *HMS Hood* in the North Sea in May 1941. Luxmoore would have been known to Ted Briggs, Flag Officer's messenger, who died in September 2008, the last of the only three survivors of a crew of 1,421. Captain Geoffrey Clement Cooke OR(1899-1904), brother of Gilbert, died with the sinking of his ship, *HMS Barham*, in the Mediterranean in November 1941 in which 684 lost their lives.

The Armed Services Memorial in Staffordshire, dedicated in October 2007, has the names of nine Old Roffensians who have died on active service since the Second World War. Among these is Sub-Lieutenant Anthony Arthur Frew OR(1936-39) who had survived the sinking of the submarine HMS Truculent following a collision in the Thames Estuary in January 1950 but died with the loss with all hands of the submarine HMS Affray in the English Channel in April 1951. Frew's name is inscribed in the Roll of Honour maintained in the submariners' chapel at Fort Blockhouse, Gosport.

The Society records many other Old Roffensians who have served with great distinction. Major-General Charles Pasley CB OR(1834-40) was responsible for the layout of Melbourne, Australia and for the extension of the Royal Dockyard at Chatham. Lieutenant-Colonel George Stevens Nash KS(1850-59) fought with the Sudan Expedition of 1885. Brigadier Doidge Estcourt Taunton CB DSO and Bar DL OR(1911-13) was a Brigade Commander in the Burma Campaign of 1944. Rear-Admiral Desmond John Hoare CB OR(1925-28) served on the battleship, *King George V*, accompanying Atlantic convoys during the Second World War. The late Major-General Sir John Evelyn Anderson KBE OR(1930-34) became Colonel Commandant of the Royal Corps of Signals. Air-Marshal Sir Roy David Austen-Smith KBE CB CVO DFC OR(1934-37) was Commander of British Forces in Cyprus in 1976. Old Roffensians continue to be represented within the three services.

At the School's annual Service of Remembrance in Rochester Cathedral the names of those who died during the two world wars are read out and wreaths laid below the memorial tablets in the Lady Chapel on behalf of the Society, the School and its pupils. Lately, pupils from the School have been invited to place their lapel poppies by the wreaths after the service. And it was after the service on 11th November 1923 that the then Dean, The Very Reverend John Storrs, had said that the "service forges more firmly the links of that long chain which binds together the past and the present of the School and enshrines in the hearts of those who are going or have gone forth, the noble example of brave men and true."

St Nicholas Memorial Chapel, Fort Blockhouse, Gosport where the Roll of Honour of submariners includes the name of Sub-Lt Anthony Arthur Frew OR. Photograph by Simon Shreeve

The third and final part of this article will be published in Issue 13, February 2009, of The Clock Tower *and will provide details of some of the Old Roffensians who have contributed to the arts and science.*

The Victoria County History at MALSC

Dr Sandra Dunster

Sandra Dunster was appointed by the University of Greenwich as Kent Team Leader for the Victoria County History's England's Past for Everyone (EPE) *in October 2007. With the help of volunteers, she is researching and writing a history of the Medway Towns, to be completed by February 2010. She previously taught local and regional history at the University of Kent. Sandra was born and raised in Whitstable and, after 25 years absence, returned to live there in 1999.*

Since I last reported on activities relating to the Medway Towns project, work has continued in the same vein. The volunteers and I all have our heads down and we are collecting and processing data on the wide range of topics needed to complete this research. Small teams of people are transcribing census data and probate records, analysing criminal activity as recorded on the Old Bailey website (http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/) and ploughing their way through the Rochester City Minute Books. Individual volunteers are working on topics as diverse as prison hulks, works outings, local politics, ethnic minorities, clubs and societies and biographies of local people.

The regular VCH column will return in the next issue of *The Clock Tower* when I look forward to sharing some of our early findings with you.

Editor's Footnotes

Amanda Thomas is a freelance writer and public relations consultant. Born in Chatham, but now based in Hertfordshire, she belongs to several historical organisations, including the Kent Family History Society, the North West Kent Family History Society, and The Council for British Archaeology; she has a degree in Italian from the University of Kent and is a member of their alumni association. Amanda was made a full member of the Society of Women Writers and Journalists in 2008.

Watching the BBC's programme, *My Family at War* (Part One was first shown on 3rd November 2008; http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00ffjwb) I was reminded of the part women played in the world wars. Whilst the programme was perhaps coloured by a rather optimistic post-feminist view that in World War One women had been able to have a go at almost any job that took their fancy in their men's absence, there is no doubt women played a crucial role. The programme also went on to show how this influenced the decision to give women over 30 the right to vote. However, it is important to recognise that *all* the work women undertook was crucial in both world wars. Recently my daughter (who is studying history for GCSE) commented, "Mum, we would have been the sorts who kept everything going...we would have made jam and knitted socks, wouldn't we?" It is a luxury to imagine how we too might rise to such a challenge today, but my daughter is right, and influenced by the knowledge that we come from a long line of such women. My grandmother, pictured on the left of the photograph, Minnie Wraight (née Rogers), worked at the Curtis and Harvey munitions work at Cliffe during the First World War. In his book, *A Pictorial History of Cooling and Cliffe*, Allan Cherry describes the works thus, 'Messrs. Curtis and Harvey built their biggest works at the Hope Point, at Cliffe, although they had four other factories in the country. It was built at the Hope Point because of its isolation. This is where high explosives were produced under contract to the government. It was extremely dangerous work for the people who handled the nitro-glycerine, which was an oily yellow liquid.' Cherry goes on to describe the several explosions which had occurred at the works a few years before, culminating in the tragedy of February 1904. The Cliffe burial register records their names, William Frederick Moon (aged 24), Daniel O'Donnell (aged 36), William Henry Know (aged 19), Elijah Talbot (aged 56) and John Murray (aged 37); others who lost their lives at the works were AJ Pepper, WJC Whiting and F Kenknight.

The original 1904 burial entries can be read at:

http://cityark.medway.gov.uk/query/results/?Mode=ShowImg&Img=/cityark/Scans/Ecclesiastical_Rochester_Archdeaconry_Area_Parishes/P094_CLIFFE_AT_HOO_1558_1990/01_INCUMBENT_Church_Registers_1558_1972/P094_01_17.html/00000333.jpg

Finally, whilst this is a special issue to commemorate the ninetieth anniversary of the signing of the armistice, I do not want to brush over the fact that we are once again approaching Christmas. This is the third *Clock Tower* Christmas number, and we at FOMA are very proud of the progress we have made as a volunteer organisation supporting the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre (MALSC). 2009 looks set to be another exciting year for MALSC and as always *The Clock Tower* is poised to report every detail. I also urge you to visit our new website, **http://www.foma-lsc.org/**, which now incorporates *The Clock Tower*, and was designed and set up by my son, Alexander. For the past two and a half years, Alex has been responsible for the punctual online publication of *The Clock Tower* and for the issuing of members' passwords and usernames. I am indebted to Alex for his help and advice, but most especially for his patience.

Minnie Rogers (left) and best friend May Newsome, pictured during World War One wearing the uniforms of the Curtis and Harvey munitions works, Cliffe

A very merry Christmas and a happy New Year to all our readers!

Witheridge's Witterings...

John Witheridge, FOMA Vice Chairman

"One of the variants of the name Witheridge is Whitheridge *or even* Whitteridge*. Its Saxon name* Wiriga*. i.e.* Doomsday Book *1068 and also the* Exeter Book *1086. Its British name is as in Old Briton,* Widdyrydg*, the* dd *being the early form of* th*, and as noted in the Welsh language. In fact, and to great interest the world over, we Witheridges rival Heinz for 57 varieties!! This could account for the reason why I am always in the soup, though being originally from Devon I presume this to be swede and turnip."*

Christmas 1965

In Aden and its surrounding countries, I roamed sand dunes and the remains of ancient volcanic upheavals, the ever moving shapes giving a new aspect to our surroundings each day. The piles of slate and shale which constituted the mountains were our only permanent feature. Time dragged by: life was lonely, tiring and boring, and I was constantly on the move, keeping out of sight from the locals. Not that there were many locals to hide from. I was in sore need of R and R.

But excitement was on its way. A disposable radio was being dropped at dusk and I needed to be there at its landing place on time. The chopper skimmed the terrain, coming in very fast from the west along the wadi bed and as close to the rock embankment as the pilot could manage. My packet bounced once in the sandy silt and then slid to a halt, thirty yards from my hide hole. I watched and waited. Twenty four hours later, when all about me seemed calm and when I was sure I was not being overlooked, I ventured out inch by inch then yard by yard until I was able to secure the packet and draw it back into my rock strewn cover. Calling in I was informed of the local situation. Traffic that was expected, movements of migratory sections of local inhabitants. I, in turn, gave the information I had stored up. Finally I was told that on 23rd December an engineers' Scamel and low loader would pass by - this was to be my lift back to civilization and a Christmas pint with my only friend in the area!

I saw the Scamel pass on its north bound journey and waited to hear it progress on its return south. I waited and I waited. Dark came and went. The Scamel was 12 hours overdue and it was now 24th, Christmas Eve. It was my job to know what was going on in my patch, and so, making my way north along the wadi wall, I began to search. Eventually I saw the Scamel laying across the track with its engine cover raised and a protruding pair of legs. As I looked up I saw another head and shoulders - plus rifle – sticking out of the cab. I sat back and watched, not wishing to blow my cover, but clearly a repair was not expected soon. As it started to get light I decided to make a move. Whistling a modern tune, as loud as I could, I strove to make my position known without showing myself. This I continued for perhaps a quarter of an hour and then I heard a voice call in reply. Creeping closer still, without showing myself, I could hold a dialogue. Afterwards, I made my way back along the wadi that I had come along. This for a hundred yards. Here I turned, dragging my belongings behind on a string. The sand was hot and dusty and covered my tracks; hot sand baked from the early sunrise, now burning my feet in those hideous flip-flops that the locals wore. Soon I came into view of the Scamel, but by now everyone had gone. I peered around and reached for the keys that that had been left in the ignition. The engine turned, but it

wouldn’t fire. Crawling under the vehicle I removed the distributor cap and immediately saw the problem - the three quarter moon contact point was broken at it clamped position. There would be no spares, but then a brain wave! I slackened off the spring clamp and removed the broken piece, then bending the circular spring slightly, I slid the broken end into the clamp. The points did not reach. I repeated the process several times until at last the point lay in a face to face emplacement. I tightened the clamp and crossed my fingers. The engine fired! I gave three bursts of the accelerator as a signal which brought the driver and his mate running back, Sten guns at the ready, to arrest me for stealing their truck! But, joy, soon we were on the homeward journey

Happy Christmas to the boys to whom I was able to give the best Christmas present ever – the prospect of a long and happy life!

We Will Remember Them…

Betty Cole, FOMA Membership Secretary

Betty Cole was appointed FOMA Membership Secretary at the last AGM in April 2008. Betty is a retired Local Government Officer and worked for 25 years with Kent Police as a civilian. She has always had a keen interest in history and when she retired took a course with The University of Kent in The Theory and Practice of Local History*, attending tutorials at the Bridgewardens' College in the Dockyard. Betty has been tracing her own family history for about 15 years and is a volunteer for the FreeCen project which publishes census records online free of charge; Betty has also been involved in the Rochester High Street project at MALSC [see* The Clock Tower*, issue 08, November 2007].*

My grandfather, Frederick Charles Wellard, was born in Marshborough, a hamlet on the outskirts of the village of Woodnesborough, Kent on 13th October 1882. He enlisted in the Royal Marines Light Infanty at Deal in 1901 and was transferred to Chatham the following year. There he met Edith Wait who worked in the ropery of HM Dockyard; they married on Valentine's Day 1904.

At the end of his first 12 years of service, Frederick re-enlisted on 2nd August 1913. At the beginning of the First World War he was on board HMS Lancaster sailing between England, New York and Halifax, Nova Scotia. In late 1915 he was promoted to Sergeant and was sent to the Dardenelles to take part in the Gallipoli campaign. He embarked on Aragon at Mudros on 14th May 1916 to be transported to France for action on the Western Front, and once in France he became part of the Royal Naval Division.

In November 1916 Fred wrote to Edith:

My dear Wife,
Just a few lines at last in answer to your letter hoping they will find you in the best of health as I am glad to say it leaves me fairly well at present. Well dear, you really must forgive me for keeping you such a long while waiting for a letter as we haven't had much time for writing lately but I sent a field P.C. which I hope you received alright. I am so pleased to hear you have got Ivy [Betty's mother] home again and looking so well. I hope she will continue to do so, you will have to be very careful with her this cold weather as she may get bad again. I am glad the remainder are alright. I would very much like to be home this Christmas with them but it doesn't look very promising at present, but one never knows what may turn up between now and Christmas. I hope you are having

Good Weather at home, we are getting it fairly wet here it makes it rotten for getting about. Give my love to Mother I hope she is quite well. Now Dear I have no time for anymore so I will close… Fondest love to all from your loving Husband Fred. XXXXXXXXXX

Before Fred was able to get home he was promoted to A/Clr. Sgt. in February 1917 and spent time at the Field Ambulance suffering with influenza, finally rejoining his unit on 3rd May. On 28th May 1917 Fred was sent on leave to England and rejoined his battalion in France on the 13th June 1917. The Royal Naval Division was deployed at Arras in August 1917 where Fred was killed. The front line diary records, ‘ 16/8/17 Normal trench routine. Trenches deepened where necessary. Enemy active with pineapples. S.Major Wellard killed. C.Q.M.S. Blackstock wounded (afterwards died).’

Three days later the battalion was relieved. Fred left a widow with five young children to bring up. Three of them including my mother, Ivy, were sent to orphanages.

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